

## **What is CUPON? Fact Based Advocacy is Catching on in Rockland and Beyond**

CUPON stands for Citizens United to Protect Our Neighborhoods. CUPON Inc. (a.k.a. CUPON Rockland) is a recently formed not-for-profit, all-volunteer, nonpolitical organization.

CUPON Inc. has established a core mission and code of conduct to be adopted and followed by all CUPON affiliated groups. The core mission of CUPON is to educate CUPON affiliates and local residents on how to get and stay informed of land use hearings, how to get access to and understand land use applications, and how to respectfully participate in meetings and engage local municipalities to:

- **Ensure local elected governing bodies and their Land Use board members' decisions safeguard the health and safety of all our citizens and first responders;**
- **Ensure that Land Use laws as set forth by local, state and federal governments are followed; and,**
- **Oppose land use board decisions that are illegal, conclusory, and/or arbitrary and capricious that result in adverse effects on the surrounding community.**

CUPON's code of conduct is designed to promote respectful, fact based, and issue centric engagement by CUPON members in municipal decision-making. In this way, CUPON hopes to enable people of good will - irrespective of race, religion, political affiliation or socio-economic statuses - to better engage in land-use planning processes to protect their neighborhoods from: poor environmental review of development applications; baseless or irrational land use decisions; problems in code enforcement that lead to overdevelopment; segregated and/or illegal housing; and abusive rental housing.

CUPON encourages diversity and hopes to foster inclusive neighborhoods where diverse groups can coexist in harmony and mutual respect. We aim to engage in respectful dialogue with developers, residents, and local officials when proposed land use applications cause concern to existing residents. We advocate that local governments fulfill their fundamental responsibility to protect existing residents' property values and community character in the face of the overreaching desires of developers.

CUPON Inc. currently has several CUPON affiliated groups in Rockland and Bergen Counties and additional communities are also looking to form more CUPON affiliates. The central CUPON Inc. organization governs recruiting, education and training of affiliate organizations and establishes the core mission and code of

conduct that ALL CUPON affiliates must follow. Once established, each affiliate operates independently but can access CUPON Inc. as a central resource.

To become a CUPON affiliate, interested town/village/area leaders along with concerned residents are evaluated as to their land use concerns and need for oversight in their community, as well as the communities' attitude toward other people and groups. This evaluation process includes a questionnaire, phone conversations, and meetings. CUPON Inc. has always clearly stated that CUPON groups must ONLY focus on improper or questionable Land Use activity and that any group seeking to affiliate with CUPON must share in, and project, our stated core values of:

- Integrity
- Inclusiveness
- Fairness
- Dignity, and Respect

We impress upon all potential new organizations and their members our Basic Code of Conduct. Every CUPON group, and associated individuals, shall conduct themselves according to our code of conduct whenever their actions or communications are related to CUPON, or risk being expelled from CUPON.

CUPON cannot control what non-CUPON members may say about us. We encourage anyone concerned about CUPON's motives and/or negative comments published about CUPON to contact us so that we are aware of and can respond, as necessary, to any inaccurate characterization of CUPON.

We welcome inquiries from community groups with land use concerns to learn more about CUPON by emailing us at: [cuponrockland@gmail.com](mailto:cuponrockland@gmail.com).